

The Future We Want for Morgan Hill

Instruction Sheet #1: Pros and Cons

- 1) Select a member of the group who will moderate your conversation and another who will keep track of the group's conclusions and report the results.
- 2) Take five minutes to read the attached list of pros and cons to yourself, referring back to the descriptions of the choices when necessary. After reading through ALL of the pros and cons, check the PROS that best describe the future you want for Morgan Hill. They do not have to be from the same scenario. Please try to check no more than 5.
- 3) As a group, take 15 minutes to talk about the future you want for Morgan Hill. Identify the three points your group generally agrees are most essential for the future of our city. If there is something important you want to see that is not included in the list of pros, please add it (anything you add should fall within the areas paid for out of the discretionary fund).
- 4) At the end of your 15 minutes, the reporter should have a list of the three points your group generally agrees are the most important for the future of Morgan Hill.

Remember:

- Try to follow the ground rules for dialogue.
- If you come up against a serious disagreement, note it and continue on.
- We are trying to find out how much common ground there is on which we can build, not to resolve all differences.

3 Choices

Choice # 1: MINIMAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES AT MINIMAL COST

Morgan Hill was built on a tradition of self-reliance, low taxes and a small-government mindset. We want that to guide our future as well. That means we have to depend more on volunteerism and civic organizations to keep our government as small as possible so taxes stay low.

People who support this choice feel that people should be free to spend their money on things they value rather than giving more to the government.

Supporters understand that this approach means Morgan Hill residents would accept some reductions in core services so that taxes and fees stay low. The city will cut expenditures to balance the budget. This will include some combination of:

- Cuts to park and recreational services; fewer programs offered
- Increased fees for all programs offered at city facilities
- Reduced park maintenance (more parks go brown; some might be sold)
- Reduction in number of police officers; reduction in open hours for fire stations
- Reduction in administrative overhead (city management, reporting, planning and training)

Choice #2: PRESERVE THE CURRENT LEVEL OF SERVICE IN MORGAN HILL

Morgan Hill offers the right level of city services: we want to see the city stay just like it is. If that means we have to pay a little more to maintain public safety and our current recreational programs, we are prepared to do so.

People who support this choice believe that the current level of service is appropriate and that any less would be unacceptable and perhaps even dangerous. They believe that it is worth some additional sacrifice on their part to accomplish two goals:

- To keep Morgan Hill safe by maintaining current levels of police and fire protection (with no decrease in personnel)
- To ensure that Morgan Hill’s new cultural, recreational, youth and senior facilities are available to all residents, regardless of income, with no increase in current fees

Supporters understand that this approach means the city will have to raise an additional \$1.5 million a year, and that it is worth paying more to make this happen

- In part through some additional sales tax from new businesses
- In part through new taxes and fees, at an average cost of \$125 per year to each household

Choice #3: ENHANCE MORGAN HILL AS A COMMUNITY

Morgan Hill has changed, and it is time for us to invest in our community to bring Morgan Hill on a par with other nearby cities. Even if our taxes and fees go up, we need to improve public safety to keep up with growth. We also need to add services that families expect, like after-school programs and additional programs for seniors and youth.

People who support this choice believe that the time has come for Morgan Hill to step up its level of service. They see the need for a long term commitment to a larger police force and a new fire/EMS station to provide for our growing population. They feel that a healthy, family-friendly community should offer a wide range of activities and services for people of all ages and incomes, and think the city should restore (and add) after school programs, summer camps and additional cultural programs for seniors and families. They also support the highest quality park maintenance to maintain the beauty of the community.

Supporters understand that this approach means the city will have to raise an additional \$4-5 million a year, and that it is worth paying more to make this happen:

- In part through aggressive pursuit of sales tax dollars from new retail, including “big-box” stores and additional car dealerships
- In part through new taxes and fees, at an average cost of \$325-425 per year to each household

The Future We Want for Morgan Hill

Pros and Cons of Each Approach

<p>MINIMAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES AT MINIMAL COST</p> <p>Morgan Hill was built on a tradition of self-reliance, low taxes and a small-government mindset. We want that to guide our future as well.</p>	
<p>PROS:</p> <div><div><input type="checkbox"/></div><p>We can and should solve the city’s budget problem without increasing taxes. This option places no new financial burdens on citizens.</p></div> <div><div><input type="checkbox"/></div><p>The people who want to take part in recreational activities should pay what it really costs. We shouldn’t expect the city to foot the bill.</p></div> <div><div><input type="checkbox"/></div><p>We should force the city government to become as lean as possible to keep our taxes down.</p></div> <div><div><input type="checkbox"/></div><p>We should rely less on government and more on volunteerism and civic organizations for our community services.</p></div> <div><div><input type="checkbox"/></div><p>This option is a sensible response to the situation. Let’s try cutting services first before we consider raising taxes, then see whether we even notice the difference.</p></div>	<p>CONS:</p> <p>We can either pay a little now to keep our city beautiful and safe, or we can pay a lot later when the costs of deferred maintenance catch up with us.</p> <p>Needed recreational programs will be eliminated, and some people will not be able to afford those that remain. We built these new recreational facilities – we should be getting the maximum use out of them.</p> <p>Cutting park maintenance means Morgan Hill’s beautiful public spaces will deteriorate, which will not match the pride we take in our homes.</p> <p>If the city starts to make significant budget cuts it may see a “brain drain” as the best city employees (including police and firefighters) seek better opportunities elsewhere.</p> <p>Morgan Hill is a safe place, but that doesn’t mean we should be cutting our police and fire protection. We need these services to keep Morgan Hill safe.</p>
<p>PRESERVE THE CURRENT LEVEL OF SERVICE IN MORGAN HILL</p> <p>Morgan Hill offers the right level of city services: we want to see the city stay just like it is.</p>	
<p>PROS:</p> <div><div><input type="checkbox"/></div><p>Essential city services like police and fire must not be reduced. Anything less would make the city unsafe.</p></div> <div><div><input type="checkbox"/></div><p>We should continue to make our recreational facilities available to everyone by keeping these services affordable and not increasing fees.</p></div> <div><div><input type="checkbox"/></div><p>We can pay a little more to keep Morgan Hill the way it is but we should avoid any big tax increases .</p></div> <div><div><input type="checkbox"/></div><p>This is an affordable increase. It means we will pay just for the things we really need without creating unnecessary and expensive new services.</p></div>	<p>CONS:</p> <p>Morgan Hill is a low-crime area, and will likely stay that way. It isn’t necessary to pay more taxes just to keep the same level of police services.</p> <p>We shouldn’t all have to pay more so everybody can use our cultural and recreational services: we should only have to pay for the services we use.</p> <p>Morgan Hill could add as many as 1200 new homes in the next five years. This plan does not allow for adding a new fire station that will be needed to protect all those new homes.</p> <p>Our current levels of services are too modest – keeping them the way they are means we will never be a first class city.</p>
<p>ENHANCE MORGAN HILL AS A COMMUNITY</p> <p>Morgan Hill has changed, and it is time for us to invest in our community to bring Morgan Hill on a par with other nearby cities.</p>	
<p>PROS:</p> <div><div><input type="checkbox"/></div><p>Morgan Hill has changed over the past several decades. We should have an enhanced community with more services.</p></div> <div><div><input type="checkbox"/></div><p>We cannot expect to add more than 1000 new homes in the next few years and make do with the same city services we have today. We have to support our growing population by expanding our police, fire and EMS services to keep our community safe.</p></div> <div><div><input type="checkbox"/></div><p>We have made an investment in our homes; we need community services that match our pride in our community.</p></div> <div><div><input type="checkbox"/></div><p>To be a truly family friendly community, we need to offer a broader range of services for children, youth, adults and seniors.</p></div>	<p>CONS:</p> <p>We cannot afford a major new tax or increase in fees. We pay enough taxes in California as it is and don’t want to add to that.</p> <p>Morgan Hill is still a small town. We don’t want to expand and try to supply all the services of a big city.</p> <p>This choice just assumes that the city needs a bunch of new money. We should try to live within our means and not keep on paying out more for services.</p> <p>It is more than likely all this money will just go into a black hole: we will be spending more, but not seeing the promised increase in services.</p>